

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BOGOTA 05506 171232Z

53

ACTION ARA-10

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SUBJ: GOC INITIATES STATE OF SIEGE MEASURES; DISTURBANCES CONTINUE

REF: BOGOTA 5434

1. LATE JUNE 13, THE GOC ANNOUNCED SPECIFIC MEASURES TO IMPLEMENT THE STATE OF SIEGE PREVIOUSLY IMPOSED IN THE DEPARTMENTS OF VALLE, ANTIOQUIA, AND ATLANTICO. THESE MEASURES AUTHORIZE MAYORS IN THESE DEPARTMENTS TO ESTABLISH CURFEWS, BAN THE SALE AND CONSUMPTION OF ALCOHOL IN PUBLIC PLACES, AND PROHIBIT PUBLIC MEETINGS AND DEMONSTRATIONS. THEY ALSO GIVE THE COLOMBIAN MILITARY JURISDICTION IN CASES INVOLVING INSTIGATION OF OR PARTICIPATION IN DELINQUENT ACTS, KIDNAPPINGS, EXTORTION AND DEMONSTRATIONS.

2. MEANWHILE, STUDENT-LED DISTURBANCES CONTINUED JUNE 13 IN CIENAGA AND ERUPTED IN SANTA MARTA, BOTH IN THE DEPARTMENT OF MAGDALENA. SANTA MARTA HAD LATELY BEEN QUIET ALTHOUGH IT HAD LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 02 BOGOTA 05506 171232Z

EXPERIENCED PERIODIC VIOLENCE DURING THE LAST SEVERAL MONTHS.

CONDITIONS IN THE VALLE AND ANTIOQUIA DEPARTMENTS HAD NORMALIZED. VIOLENCE BROKE OUT IN THE TOWN OF LA DORADA, DEPARTMENT OF CALDAS, JUNE 13. THERE, PUBLIC FORCES JUNE 12 HAD FORCED LAND INVADERS OUT OF A RANCH OCCUPIED JUNE 11, BRINGING THE PROTESTERS, ALLEGEDLY EGGED ON BY LEFTIST EXTREMISTS, INTO THE STREETS. TWO OF THE PROTESTERS WERE KILLED, REPORTEDLY BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC FORCES, LEADING TO FURTHER PROTESTS ON JUNE 14 AND 15. AS OF JUNE 16, CALM HAD APPARENTLY RETURNED TO THE CITY. THE GOC HAS NOT YET EXTENDED THE STATE OF SIEGE TO EITHER MAGDALENA OR CALDAS.

3. IN BOGOTA THE SITUATION HAS BEEN QUIET. THE RALLY OF THE NATIONAL POPULAR ALLIANCE (ANAPO) JUNE 13 WAS UNEVENTFUL. ON JUNE 14, SEVERAL HUNDRED TAXI DRIVERS STAGED AN IMPROMPTU AND PEACEFUL PARADE OF AUTOMOBILES TO PROTEST AGAINST THE DANGER THEY EXPERIENCE IN PROVIDING NIGHT-TIME SERVICE. THE GOC MINISTRY OF LABOR ALSO ANNOUNCED THE IMPOSITION OF COMPULSORY ARBITRATION IN THE CEMENT WORKERS STRIKE, THEREBY REQUIRING THE WORKERS TO RETURN TO WORK NO LATER THAN JUNE 19. THE COMMUNIST-LED TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION OF COLOMBIAN WORKERS (CSTC) INDICATED IT WOULD RESIST THE MINISTRY'S ACTION, THREATENING A NATION-WIDE CEMENT WORKERS STRIKE, TO INCLUDE THOSE COMPANIES WHERE AGREEMENTS HAD PREVIOUSLY BEEN SIGNED.

4. COMMENT: VIOLENT DISTURBANCES IN ONE OR MORE DEPARTMENTS AT THE SAME TIME ARE NOTHING NEW IN COLOMBIA. HOWEVER, PRESIDENT LOPEZ'S DECISION TO IMPOSE A STATE OF SIEGE, WHICH MAY BE EXTENDED TO OTHER DEPARTMENTS, HAS HEIGHTENED PUBLIC EXPECTATIONS THAT HE IS DETERMINED TO END THE VIOLENCE. EACH EVENT AND GOC REACTION WILL UNDOUBTEDLY RECEIVE GREATER PUBLIC ATTENTION AND PRESS COVERAGE THAN WOULD OTHERWISE BE THE CASE. NEVERTHELESS, WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THE PUBLIC ORDER SITUATION IN COLOMBIA IS GENERALLY ANY WORSE THAN IT HAS BEEN AT VARIOUS TIMES DURING RECENT MONTHS.
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